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ABSTRACT

This paper, from the Faculty Association of Community and Technical Colleges (FACTC) in Washington, addresses the issue of part-time faculty employment in the state's community colleges. In fall 1997, there were 3,019 full-time and 5,256 part-time instructors in Washington's two year colleges. Departments that rely most heavily on part-time faculty are those teaching basic skills, developmental, and college English. FACTC states that there are good reasons for employing part-time faculty, such as when a certain course should be taught and there is no one to teach it, and it is not offered often enough to warrant a full-time contract. But there are still too many part-time faculty filling positions that could utilize full-time faculty, and part-time instructors continue to be poorly paid and mistreated. And because many adjunct faculty teach at more than one college or have other second jobs in order to make a living wage, they do not have time to participate in conferences, do committee work, or do independent research and publishing. Thus, when a coveted full-time job is available, their vitae are lacking. FACTC suggests that the solution to the problem is complicated in its political, policy, and moral dimensions. The issue contends that the overdependence on part-time faculty adversely affects higher education. (NB)

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Rex Hollowell, Editor

FALL 1998

PART-TIME FACULTY
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STATISTICS, RESPONSES AND QUESTIONS

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The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges received a report on system-wide part-time statistics from staff at their May 21 study session. Their major claim was that "over the past several years community and technical colleges across the nation and in Washington relied on part-time faculty to teach more of the curriculum." Included in their report were the following facts (language usually theirs):

> Though variable throughout the system, part-time faculty salaries are less than full-time faculty rates. Comparison of salaries from other institutions and states extrapolated to what

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one would make in a year of teaching a full load at part-time pay place Washington colleges in the middle. The Ten Best Practices Principles and continuous reporting on them will let us know where the working conditions of part-paid are undergoing improvement and where they are not.

In fall 1997, most (55 percent of the 5,256 headcount) part-time instructors taught one-third classroom load or less (5 credits). Alternately, the 23 percent of the instructors teaching two-thirds of a load or more account for 44 percent of the part-time classroom load or FTEF.

The pattern of teaching at more than one college, called "Freeway Flyers," is predominately a Puget Sound situation that, during fall 1997, accounted for 13 percent of the part-time FTEF. Most teach at two colleges, however, 27 people taught at three or more state supported colleges.

Although colleges recruit nationally, Washington part-time instructors are hired for 50 percent of the vacant full-time faculty positions each year.

The rate of employment of part-time faculty varies greatly by college and by discipline. Across the system 72 percent of the off-campus and evening courses are taught by them. Departments that rely most on part-time faculty are basic skills and developmental and college English.

Empirical studies have found no significant difference in the quality of instruction offered by part-time faculty and full-time faculty as measured by student ratings, class retention, or student achievement in subsequent classes.

FACTC applauds the State Board's attempt to come up with figures that tell clearly and informatively the statistical story of the use of part-time faculty in our system. What we think is needed is clarification of certain statistical claims, a small amount of editorial comment and a narrative face on other claims. All three are needed to give a complete report to whomever is interested in the issue. We asked part-paid faculty to speak to their situations and their impact on quality. Since a vast majority of the respondents to our request for responses asked for anonymity all remarks are anonymous.

Regarding the assertion that "Part-time faculty are increasingly relied upon to teach courses at two-year colleges" we suggest that information be included showing the trend toward use of part-paid faculty.

The Use of Part-Time Faculty

"Many adjuncts reported that collegiality is limited. 'Meetings are seldom scheduled so part-timers can attend, and even if they do attend, they are not paid for their time. As a result, part-time instructors are usually not included in departmental and other college activities and decision making, so they often just don't know what's going on. Opportunities for sharing ideas and materials are rare'"

"In my own department of English, we have ten full-time instructors and twenty-two part-time instructors, and only three of the part-time instructors choose to teach less than full time. There are eleven of us on a priority hiring list, and almost all of us have taught for at least eight years. We are the 'permanent part-time faculty.'"

Another says "One of the implications of working as a non-permanent part-time employee is academic

freedom. Sensitivity to termination impacts course content: Part-time employment is never secure, so instructors are at the mercy of each quarter's evaluations. This may lead them to choose conservative methods and materials rather than to take innovative risks. They may also censor class materials to stay away from challenging but controversial topics. A part-time instructor may be pressed to make choices to please students."

"One instructor told several stories of times that students became aware of her adjunct position and thereby challenged her authority and decision making on issues made in class."

"An instructor reported that adjuncts experienced, 'A lack of respect among their fellow teachers and colleagues, often for years. No listing of their names on faculty rosters, no way for students to contact them, even after years on campus.'"

Compensation

FACTC thinks it inadvertently cruel to compare annual salaries with national cohorts when almost no part-paid faculty in the Washington State Community and Technical College system is allowed to make that annual salary, given the 80 percent limitation. That is, over time, nearly all ate not permitted to teach a full load. Are they permitted in other states to make the full annual amount? If so, then their salaries should be compared with what our part-timers really make, rather than with what one hypothetically could make if the world were fairer than the one in which we now live. The same should be true if the answer to the question is "no".

Part-paid faculty speak eloquently about their pay.

"We are the braceros, the field hands, the illegal aliens, the state educational system's equivalent of the asparagus pickers of eastern Washington. We have been exploited in an unethical and unfair manner for decades, despite our professional commitment, our experience and post graduate degrees, and our excellent student evaluations. All we are asking is that you please grant us equal pay for equal work."

"Being paid a salary that is significantly lower than my full-time colleagues for the same contact and associated teaching hours is degrading, demeaning, and produces a life-style of insecurity and uncertainty of employment from quarter to quarter, year to year It also necessitates teaching in more than one school, as we are not allowed to teach more than two courses in any one school, or district, and even at parity with full time faculty, two courses is not an adequate salary."

"Because adjunct faculty salaries are so low, do not even begin to provide a living income, some colleges could lower the teaching standards and you could hire people without terminal degrees who would prefer part-time teaching at a community college to, say, full-time work at McDonalds or the Gap."

"Two categories of significant difficulties: economic security and instructional excellence. Many of us carry a full load by teaching at more than one school. And the determination of load is also relative; the number of credits I teach would be considered full-time at many universities.

"There are no paid office hours. Many must work at other schools or jobs and so cannot spend extra hours on campus to met with students.

"Like many part-time instructors, I rush from my part time college job to the next job to make ends meet. The students get short-changed."

"Part-time instructors do most of their work without pay; the number of hours varies depending on the subject: Part-timers are paid for half an hour for every hour in class; collecting and responding to mail, phone messages, and e-mail, placing book orders, copying materials for class, organizing books and papers, filing documents, maintaining rosters, and recording grades uses up all of that time and more."

"Other employment compromises efficiency: In order to piece together a livable income, part-timers who don't rely on a spouse or independent wealth must hold additional jobs, either commuting to other colleges some distance away or doing other work. While breadth of experience can ideally enrich an instructor's background, this scattering of attention takes its toll on classroom performance in many ways. Similar courses may be taught very differently at different colleges, maximizing the inefficiency of a part-time's preparation efforts."

"Any fair person can see there is inequity in pay between full-time and part-time teachers. The imbalance is obvious. The dollar for dollar amount in the classroom favors full-time teachers, yet part-time teachers must deliver the same training, perform at the same level, transmit the same skills training and must certify via grades that a student is ready to progress. There is no difference between the full-time and part-time teacher in the matter of student acquisition of training and skills in the class room."

"The hardest statement for all adjunct employees to confess to, is that in spite of piles of positive evaluations, they faced the fact that they could have done better or been better had they had the same benefits as full-time staff."

Baseline Figures

There are 3,019 teaching full-time in the system and 5,256 teaching part-time. Twenty-three percent of the part-time faculty teach forty-four percent of the courses taught by part-paid faculty. FACTC thinks it appropriate that at least those persons be thought of as desiring full-time employment in the system.

Working Conditions

FACTC has noticed, and it has been noted by others in testimony to the Board, that Best Practices Reporting allows a college to, say, report that they have office and computer access for adjuncts if they are providing same for a small minority of part-time faculty. The reporting needs to be corrected so that improvement, or lack of it, can be traced in a way that improvement-or lack of it-can be demonstrated.

Listen to what part-time faculty say about working conditions.

"Students are not well served when we have no office in which to meet privately with them or when our phone extensions are 'unassigned' so that we can receive only voice mail, not direct calls."

"Many part-timers have offices where they can meet with students. No paid office hours. Many must work at other schools or jobs and so cannot spend extra hours on campus to meet with students."

Some reported having "no regular access to supplies or even the buildings they are teaching in, the copy machines, or even paperwork explained to them, which they are required to fill out in order to be paid."

"While I don't have my own office, the staff is accommodating to find me a loaner. I feel my pay scale is fair. In order to continue at two jobs, I've had to have flexibility in my schedule and hours. All continuing education has been available to me,. I have used the staff as my mentors and have gained strength in revising course work and writing objectives with their guidance. Evaluations have been

supportive and timely."

Others reported conditions as: "No space to call their own not even a shelf, even after years of teaching a course on a campus. No ready access to their needed handouts. Often lugging huge quantities of baggage and boxes to and from classes that can change from week to week."

One instructor shared the story of using her own copy machine, or a local copy company, because she wasn't allowed to use the college copy machine when she needed it.

Several instructors confided that they had no say in purchase of supplies or necessary needs. Instead they purchased them out of pocket or had students buy them.

"One person with 22 years of teaching experience taught courses beyond the two courses allotted to her per quarter—for free! She has no retirement coverage whatsoever other than the social security she has paid into, based on her meager part-time salary. In addition, as a result of the most recently negotiated salary agreement, in which those part-time faculty at the old step ten had all their hours zeroed out, she lost 17 years of accumulated hours taught. No other step on the salary scale lost any hours. This was just one more in the long string of injustices affecting this teacher."

"I have taken on as many classes in as many schools as a schedule will permit without conflict; this has resulted in teaching five different courses (3 of them labs) in 3 schools for several quarters now."

Good News From Part-time Faculty

"Creating a permanent part-time status will include teachers in the community, give them voice, foster participation, stabilize the faculty, and provide continuity for students."

"Part-time faculty in my department have received full participation in teaching elective courses, have been recognized and included socially, they are appreciated for their teaching, and reminded of their value."

"I've been teaching on a part time basis in community colleges in NY and WA since 1991 and have discovered that I not only enjoy teaching, but that I CAN excel at it. I have life experience which informs by teaching style, and a meaningful passion for my subject material; for students who are there to learn (and we know they are not necessarily the majority), I am a resource both in and outside the classroom, and make myself freely available to their questions and concerns."

Freeway Fliers

According to the news release dated May 18, 1989 the headcount number of freeway fliers is 340. It would be interesting to know what percentage of them teach two-thirds of a load or more and how many of them get benefits such as retirement and medical care.

Hiring of Full-time Positions

Easily the most encouraging information in the report is that "...Washington part-time instructors are hired for 50 percent of the vacant full-time faculty positions each year." Though we are told this is true for the last three years we would like to be given the trends for, say, the last ten years. Though our information is anecdotal, we have heard otherwise and are happy to have our suspicions statistically refuted.

Where Part-timers are Used

While we understand that 72 percent of the off-campus and evening courses, FACTC wonders why departments of basic skills and developmental and college English use the highest percentage of part-time faculty.

Any Impact on Quality?

The basic issue is quality. That is, are we doing the kind of job that turns students into learners? We are told in the report that "empirical studies have found no significant difference in the quality of classroom instruction offered by part-time and full-time faculty...". We agree fully with that claim and are happy to hear it voiced so unequivocally. But in another part of the report we are told that, in national studies, 69 percent of a full-time faculty member's time is spent in teaching. That claim make sense of our duties only if one includes preparation as well as classroom work and preparation is usually not compensated in the work of adjuncts. Is that being done?

It is time for us to articulate our social justice agenda. FACTC was going to try in this publication to keep the two issues separate but were taught by the part-paid faculty we talked to of the impossibility of such an attempt. The social justice issue is easily stated: **part-paid faculty are doing the full job that needs to be done only if we are exploiting them; alternatively if they are doing only what they are paid to do either the full work is not being done or the slack is assumed by fully-paid faculty.**

We thought we would publish an essay in its entirety because it makes clear just how difficult it is to separate the question of quality from the question of social justice.

OUR REALITY

Let's forego the introduction, Aristotle's emotional appeal, and the retelling of many an adjunct's hard luck story, which I don't have time to write, and get straight to the point: Is higher education adversely affected by its over dependence on adjunct faculty members? As much as we don't want to think so, the reality is, a resounding--Yes. Because adjunct faculty salaries are so low, do not even begin to provide a living income, it can't help but be. Adjuncts who are the sole support of themselves and/or their families must earn a second income, somewhere, somehow. In so doing, they have less time for their students and little time, nor the financial resources, for their professional development. We prepare for our classes, teach them, and evaluate our students' work, but is that where teaching begins and ends? Are we just warm bodies bringing in FTE's for our institution? I like to think not. However, the reality is, until we are paid a living salary, we can never be a true part of the academy.

Because we hold two jobs, we whisk ourselves away from campus early in the day to make more money elsewhere. Unlike our full-time counterparts, students don't find us in our offices, willing to answer questions, address concerns, or further the intellectual dialogue begun in class. If we have an office, students find closed doors and won't be able to communicate with us again until the next class meeting. By then, they may have found another teacher who can answer their questions. At next class meeting, their concerns may seem inappropriate to address with other students milling about before class begins or after it ends, and the zeal they felt about further discussion may seem inconsequential given the new information and discussion of that day. Like most educators, adjuncts became teachers because they love learning, working with students, and feel an incredible satisfaction serving their community as part of a academic community. However, the reality is our financial stress renders us unable to serve our students to the extent we would like.

Likewise, holding two jobs precludes adjunct faculty members from being a true part of the academy. Our voices are not heard in department meetings. We cannot be active participants in committee work. We cannot spend time reading and researching , nor writing for publication. We have not the time nor money to attend conferences. For the same reasons, we cannot further our own, taking more graduate classes in the hopes of exercising our own intellectual muscle and bringing new information and ways of thinking to our students. We rarely even have the time to engage in extended dialogue with our colleagues. The reality is earning one income with two jobs, at best, retards our professional development.

Clearly, our institutions expect adjunct faculty to, at a minimum, teach with competency and enthusiasm for a fraction of the salary we should be earning. Because we are educators by profession and don't want to abandon teaching, we prostitute our intellects and our expertise. We settle for an income below the poverty level. Just to get by, many of us must also be employed elsewhere, which interferes with the totality of being an educator. So when that coveted full-time position opens at any institution, we can "proudly" show our vitas with no committee work, no continuing education, no independent research, no papers published or delivered at conferences. The reality is we can say we're hard workers, doing the best we can for our students, ourselves and our families: just give us a living wage, and we'll show you how much better we can serve higher education. Until then, we'll continue doing our jobs, feeling, at times diminished, and always exploited.

Conclusion

FACTC holds the following positions:

> There are good reasons for having some part-time faculty. They invigorate the faculty and students, bring expertise and new insights to the college and, in some areas there should be a constant shuffle between classroom and industry for the simple reason that one needs to be current. When a certain course should be taught and there is no one to teach it and it is not offered enough to justify a full-time contract, an adjunct is indicated. These and other reasons make part-paid faculty a good thing.
>
> There are too many part-time faculty, they are too poorly paid and they are too mistreated to be able to call our system a just one.
>
> There is no bad person, organization or agency on whose steps we can lay the blame for this deplorable use of part-paid faculty. The blame is distributible throughout and outside the system. But very few escape unscathed.
>
> The solution to the problem is complicated in at least the political, policy and moral dimensions. The solution will thus require the concentrated work of all players working together after thinking together. The quality of the information must be improved, the conversation must be broadened, potential policies must be carefully examined for their impact on individuals.

We hope this FACTC Focus contributes to the conversation.

Our thank to the many anonymous contributors. Their efforts will be justified only if things get better.

Rex Hollowell, Editor

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Faculty Association of Community and Technical Colleges (FACTC)

The Faculty Association of Community and Technical Colleges is an organization composed of

faculty representatives from all participating community colleges and technical institutions within the State of Washington. We are dedicated to the task of improving communication between the various campuses and to the other members of the community and technical college system. As one of its purposes, FACTC undertakes projects such as this publication, designed to support faculty participation in the operation of the community and technical college system.

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